MOSE HOWARD'S FISH-TRAP

BY J. R. HAMMOND.

NICODEMUS SQUAB, professor of orthography in the Skunkville district school, was a man of an inquiring turn of mind.

Overhearing some of the scholars discussing a prospective coon hunt that was to come off the following Saturday night, the professor drew near and inquired if they would allow him to join them.

"Of course you kin jine us," said Mose Howard, who was the ringleader in all the deviltment in the neighborhood. "Glad tu have you go 'long. We'll call for you."

"Thank you," said the professor. "I never was coon hunting in my life, though I've always wanted to go—just to see how it is done, you know."

According to promise, Mose Howard, Dick Miller and Joe Smiley called for the professor, who was ready and waiting, and who joined the hunters, anticipating a jolly time.

After winding up the coon hunt, which resulted in the capture of five 'possums and three coons, Mose Howard proposed that they should go back by the fish-trap and catch a mess of fish.

The proposition was unanimously agreed to, and they struck off down the creek, the professor bringing up the rear, puffing and blowing, though highly elated at the variation that this additional act in the program promised, as well as at the prospect of a successful raid upon the finny tribe.

The queer contraption that Mose dignified with the name of fish-trap, consisted merely of a large sack held open by a hoop, around which the mouth of the sack was fastened, and a couple of ropes, one end of each of which was fastened to each side of the hoop, while the other ends were fastened to trees on the opposite sides of the stream, in such a way as to allow the hoop to remain about half way submerged.

On the bank of the creek was a lantern, in which was about half a tallow candle.

Producing some matches Mose lit the candle and proceeded to explain to the professor the modus operandi of catching fish with his new-fangled trap.

"You just take the lamp and wade into the trap and hold the lamp right in front of the mouth so that the fish can see how to run in, and we boys'll go away down the creek and drive the fish up and into the trap."

The professor, as unsuspicious of any trick as a baby, shucked himself, and then taking up the lantern, waded into the trap that the boys set for him instead of for fish, and in the construction of which they had not only exhausted their financial resources in the purchase of the material out of which it was constructed, but also their ingenuity in the getting up of the same.

"Ugh!" grunted the professor, as he reached the trap and placed the lantern in the position indicated, "this water is cold as ice. I want you boys to make haste."

"Yes, sir," responded the boys.

"You'll hear us hollerin' as we come," said Mose, and off they started down the creek at a trot.

"All right," said the professor.

As soon as they got out of sight their gait slackened to a walk, which they kept till they reached a point some 400 yards distant from the trap, when, seating themselves on a log they began the most uproarious din of yelling and howling that had ever awakened the slumbering echoes of those old woods since the aborigines had vacated the premises.

After about an hour spent in this way the boys got up and advanced slowly up the bank of the stream about 100 yards, when they seated themselves on another log, where they continued to whoop and yell like so many wild Indians.

After another hour thus spent they made another advance, which brought the professor and the fish-trap within their range of vision, though, owing to the darkness they were not visible to him.

"Hurry up, boys!" he shouted. "I'm nearly froze, and the candle's nearly out."

That was what they were waiting for—the candle to burn out—so that their failure to catch fish could be laid to the absence of the light.

"Yes, sir!" they shouted back; "we're hurrying as fast as we can!" And renewing their yells they advanced slowly—very slowly—up the stream.

"Hurry up! hurry up!" again shouted the professor. "The candle will be out in two minutes."

"Ay, ay, sir!" shouted Mose in reply, "but you must stop hollerin' or you'll skeer the fish."

Sure enough, in about two minutes the candle gave a last convulsive flicker, and in the twinkling of an eye thick darkness reigned as absolutely over the professor and the fish-trap as elsewhere.

"Boys," said Mose, in a tone loud enough for the professor to hear him, "there ain't no use wadin' in this water any longer; le's go back an' git our cloze."

Seating themselves on a log they sat perfectly silent for a while — long enough, as they thought, for it to have taken them to go back to where they commenced their drive, dress themselves and reach that point on their return—when they got up and resumed their progress up stream.

On reaching the trap they found the professor on shore, and though he had completed his toilet, his teeth were chattering louder than a pair of castanets rattling off a quickstep march.

"We'll have to try it over ag'in some other time," said Mose, "and fetch more candle with us. I thought we had plenty this time, but we didn't. I guess I'll bring enough next time."

"Why didn't you fellows hurry up," said the professor. "What made you come so slow?" the chattering of his teeth as he spoke causing him to cut the words into more than the legitimate number of syllables to which they were entitled.

"Couldn't come no faster," said Mose. "The water was so thunderin' cold the fish wouldn't drive fast."

Satisfied with this explanation the professor fell into ranks as the boys filed off in the direction of home. The exercise of walking soon brought a reaction in his system, the first effect of which was to put a stop to the music of the castanets, and on reaching home he pronounced himself all right again.

Some time during the ensuing week Mose Howard informed the professor that they were going to try the fish-trap again the following Saturday night, and asked him if he didn't want to go along.

The professor gave an involuntary shudder as the recollection of that protracted soaking in ice water of the previous Saturday night flashed across his mind.

Discretion prompted him to give a negative response. Curiosity, however, got the better of discretion, and he accepted the invitation.

"I'll be on hand," said he. "There's no fun standing in that cold water, especially when you get no fish, but if you can stand it I guess I can."

At the appointed time the boys came by, when, the professor joining them, they proceeded to the fish-trap.

On arriving there Mose produced a couple of pieces of candle, one of which he proceeded to light and put in the lantern. It was nearly twice as long as the one they had burned out on the previous occasion.

The other piece he placed in the lantern so that it could be easily got at if it should be needed.

This latter piece Mose had manufactured himself especially for the occasion, and had taken some little pains in its construction.

After soaking the wick in water until it was perfectly saturated he had taken a skillet and melted some tallow therein, then placing the wick in a mold, he filled the latter with the melted tallow, and the thing was accomplished.

This particular candle he had carefully marked so as to be able to distinguish it from any other candle.

Before completing their arrangements at the fish-trap preparatory to beginning the drive the professor proposed that one of the boys should take his place at the trap while he accompanied the others and assisted in driving the fish.

"Kin you swim?" asked Mose Howard.

"No," answered the professor.

"Well, you'd run the risk ov gittin' drownded, then," said Mose.

"You go on, then," said the professor, "and I'll mind the trap."

So off the boys started, and going down the stream about a mile, seated themselves upon a log, and began yelling and whooping as on the previous occasion.

Hour after hour passed, each hour seeming to the benumbed professor an age.

The yelling seem to approach slowly but surely.

The boys had now arrived at a point where every motion of the professor was distinctly visible.

The piece of candle Mose had lighted and put in the lantern was nearly burned out. Taking up the other piece the professor proceeded to light it. Placing it in the lantern it gave a splutter and went out. Dark! Dark was no name for it. No moon, no stars, no matches.

But that bogus candle would have been a match for a whole box of matches.

"What in thunder's the matter now?" shouted Mose.

"The candle's gone out!" shouted the professor back. "Have you any matches?" he inquired.

"Nary match," said Mose.

"What's to be done?" inquired the professor.

"Nuthin'," said Mose. "The thing's played out. Put on your cloze, while we go and git our'n and then we'll skip for home."

Seating themselves on a log the boys remained quiet for a while, then rising to their feet they came up to where the professor was waltzing around trying to get up a circulation.

"Another waterhaul," said Mose.

"Looks a good deal like it," said the professor.

"Don't know why the mischief some of us didn't think tu bring some matches," said Mose.

"I don't know, either," responded the professor in a deprecating tone, as though he entertained the idea that somehow he had been mainly instrumental in producing the bad luck.

"Better luck next time," said Mose, philosophically, as he struck out for home, followed by the others.

They had proceeded about two-thirds of the way home, groping their way as best they could through the thick darkness, when a shrill, prolonged scream directly ahead of them, and apparently at no great distance, broke upon their startled ears.

"Painter!" ejaculated Mose, in a low tone of voice, though sufficiently loud to be distinctly audible to the professor, at the same time springing to one side, and the next moment he was out of the professor's hearing.

The fact was he had only taken a couple of steps and then squatted in the grass, as completely concealed from his companions by the intense darkness as though he had been on the opposite side of the globe.

"Painter!" repeated the other boys, following Mose's example of springing to one side and squatting in the grass.

Left alone the professor, with hair on end, paused a moment to collect his scattered thoughts, but only a moment.

Another scream, long drawn out and apparently but a few yards distant, set his plump body in motion, and the next moment he was streaking it across the country as fast as his duck legs could carry him.

Tumbling over a log lying on the edge of a bank some twenty feet high and nearly perpendicular, down which he rolled, he landed in a mud hole at the bottom.

Gathering himself up he began looking for his hat, which had parted company with him on the way down the bank, when another scream breaking upon his ear he struck out once more on his race for life, hatless and covered with mud from his head to his heels.

Coming to a briar patch he was on the point of diverging from his course in order to try and go around it when another scream precipitated the terror-stricken professor into the patch like a catapault.

Emerging from the brier patch with his coat-tails torn into ribbons, the mud-begrimed professor held on the even tenor of his way without any diminution of speed for a hundred yards or so, when his pace began to slacken a little. Another scream, however, put him on his mettle again, but as that was the last, and as he was about exhausted, he soon settled down to a walk, and presently stumbling over a log, he picked himself up and seated himself thereon.

After resting a while, plunged in the meantime in a deep cogitation, he finally concluded to try and seek a shelter for the remainder of the night. So, starting forward, he wandered about, first in one direction and then in another, and it was not until daylight began to streak the eastern horizon that he stumbled on a clearing in the woods, in the midst of which was a log cabin.

Cautiously approaching the cabin, he had reached the foot of a sapling some fifty steps from the door, when a big dog came dashing around the corner of the house, barking furiously.

No sooner did the professor catch sight of the dog bouncing along in the direction of him and the sapling, than he was seized with such a sudden panic as to cause him to grasp the sapling in his arms and start up it, though, owing to want of practice, with hardly the agility of a squirrel. After a tremendous effort, he succeeded in reaching a fork some ten feet from the ground, where he seated himself, and awaited the issue of events.

He didn't have long to wait. The furious barking of the dog soon aroused the inmates of the cabin.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed after the professor had succeeded, by almost superhuman exertions, in seating himself comfortably in the fork of the sapling, out of reach of the dog, when the door of the cabin opened and a huge six-footer of a backwoodsman, somewhat airily attired, with a long rifle in his hand, emerged therefrom.

"What you got thar, Bull?" said the man, as he approached the sapling, at the root of which the dog was barking vociferously. "What is it, old feller?" he continued. "Bar, painter, ur catamount?"

Bull's response was an abortive attempt to climb the tree, accompanied by a furious outburst of barking.

"Be quiet, old feller," said the man; "we'll soon see what it is," at the same time raising his rifle to his shoulder.

"Hold on there!" shouted the professor, who was beginning to realize the perilous position in which he was placed, and the imminent danger he was in of being shot for a bear or a catamount. "I am no varmint. I'm Nicodemus Squab, professor of orthography in the Skunkville district school."

"Hello!" said the backwoodsman, as he lowered his rifle, "is that so? Well, that gits me. What in thunder ur you doin' up thar?"

"Wait till I get down and I'll tell you." And crawling out of the crotch in which he had been seated the professor slid down the sapling, when he soon succeeded in explaining matters to the satisfaction of that thinly-clad backwoodsman and his savage bulldog.

It was now broad daylight, and when he reached Skunkville the sun was some distance above the horizon, climbing upward toward the zenith.

Of course, every man, woman and child in the place beheld, with wonder-depicted countenances, the advent of the mud-begrimed, hatless professor, and a thousand conjectures were indulged in as to the cause of his singular appearance.

The professor was disposed to be reticent on the subject, answering interrogatories in relation to the matter evasively, but the joke was too good to be kept, and in less than twenty-four hours his approach toward any crowd was greeted by a broad grin overspreading the countenances of a majority of the members thereof, and his departure signalized by a low guffaw.

This conduct on the part of the citizens annoyed the professor considerably at first; then it grew monotonous and he became disgusted.

Finally he burst into a flame of indignation, and after taking his revenge out of the hides of the pupils, especially Mose Howard and his confederates, the irate professor shook the dust of Skunkville from off his feet and betook himself to parts unknown.—New York Weekly.

A Microscopic Land Question.

The exact adjudication of an extraordinary land suit brought in the District Court of Colombo, Ceylon, would probably give to each share claimed a blade of grass or a grain of sand. Eight men are suing some eighteen others for a partition of a piece of waste land nine acres in extent. The various shares to be allotted to each necessitates the resolution of the parcel into 18,184,300 shares. The plaint naively adds that a partition is impracticable, and desires an order for the sale of the land and the division of the purchase money among the various co-owners. Even that will be an operation involving much perplexity, as the Ceylon currency does not admit of reckonings on a scale of millionths of a cent. Mr. Proctor Pedris filed proxy for some of the defendants, and asked a fortnight to file answer. He was promptly given the whole fortnight in view of the extraordinary calculations he will have to get through in the meanwhile. —Philadelphia Telegraph.

Only Gloom Ahead.

The winter has been unusually severe, and the lake from which the ice company gathered its crop was frozen to a much greater depth than usual.

"I suppose, colonel," remarked a citizen to the president of the company one cold morning, "that you won't charge us so much for our ice next summer as you did last. You're getting a tremendous crop."

"We may have to charge more," stiffly replied the president. "Think of the trouble and expense involved in cutting ice three feet thick!"—Youth's Companion.

Perfidious Man! Foolish Maiden!

The North China Daily News reports the case of a Chinese maiden who, being jilted by the young man to whom she was engaged, broke the engagement ring into fragments and swallowed them. A few hours later she was dead.

A Rare and Interesting Trophy.

SCALP-LOCK SHIRT RECENTLY RECEIVED AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

A rare and interesting trophy is now on exhibition among the North American Indian collection in the new west wing of the American Museum of Natural History. It is the scalp-lock shirt worn in battle by War Eagle, the famous, fierce old Sioux warrior. More than ordinary interest is attached to this garment from the fact that it is said to be the only garment of its kind in existence—at least the only one that has yet come into the hands of the white man. Extraordinary and peculiar interest is attached to it from the fact that nearly two hundred or more human locks of hair cover the front and back portions of the same. These are all from the heads of victims slain either in battle or massacre during the early days of frontier life.

The material is of heavy buckskin made in primitive Indian fashion. Four rows of fine porcupine work, V shape, are stitched in the front and back, sewed with sinews, and to these bands are fastened the many locks of hair. The locks are of all grades and colors, many long and fine ones being undoubtedly those of women. The full history of the coat has not been ascertained.—New York Mail and Express.

Removable Shoe Sole.

Can Be Put on and Off Much Like a Skate.

A removable metal sole for shoes is a novelty which will be appreciated by many laboring men, more particularly those engaged in some classes of mill work, who are compelled to wear hobnail shoes in the performance of the daily labor, and who may not desire to

METAL SHOE SOLE.

be thus encumbered in going to and from their work. In a device recently brought out to meet this demand the metal sole can be taken off like a skate and laid aside until again wanted.

The removable metal shoe sole is shown herewith. It consists of a shape of the size and lines of a heavy shoe sole, with portions cut away to decrease the weight as far as possible. On the front and side edges are clamp pieces adapted to engage with the soles of the shoes and hold the metal sole in place, in much the same manner as is done in the case of locking skates. At a suitable point forward of the heel there is secured to the leather sole a plate with tongue-piece adapted to lock with the rear part of the metal sole and to hold the same rigidly in place, and yet to permit of its convenient removal when it is so desired. The wearing surface of the metal sole is furnished with points, much the same as those of the hob-nails. Besides being a very great comfort, this scheme is said to make a very great addition to the life of a pair of shoes, for the reason that the wear is equally distributed between the leather and the metal sole.

Wilful Woman.

After the old gentleman had invited the young one to be seated the latter coughed once or twice to clear his throat, and then bluntly suggested that he wished to marry the old gentleman's daughter.

The old gentleman didn't wish to be too ready to give his consent, but he admitted after a few minutes he thought he had no objections.

"That's just the trouble," protested the young man disconsolately. "If you'd only oppose it and order me out of the house once or twice and buy a bulldog I'd have some show of getting her."—New York Press.

Man's fondness for sharing his misfortune is equalled only by his hesitancy in whacking up his good luck.

How Hemp is Grown.

Hemp of the Philippine Islands, or rather the plant from which it is manufactured, is known in scientific circles as "musa textilius" and by the natives as abaca. It belongs to the plantain family, closely resembling the banana plant. The latter has a leaf similar in shape to that of the abaca, but of a slightly darker green. The difference in appearance must be told by the expert; the inexperienced can tell the difference only by tasting the fruit. The abaca tastes like a green persimmon. Many of the natives are engaged in its growth and sale. It flourishes on hilly ground, and, like the banana plant, takes about three years to flower. When it comes to the flowering age it is cut down and made ready for scraping. The stalk springs up again from the roots, and soon begins its aspiration to go to seed. It is not permitted to do so, however, as the seeding process reduces the quality of the fiber.

The abaca grows to the height of eight feet, but is not a tree in any sense except that it gives shade. Its leaves run from its roots, enfolding the flower stem until near the top, when they branch out into great wav-

THE ABACA FROM WHICH HEMP IS MADE

ing fans. The manner of growth can be compared to nothing in the United States except a young onion, which is not a fair illustration on account of the insignificant size of the latter. But the leaf layers are wound in that way, though they are fully a quarter of an inch thick and six inches wide.

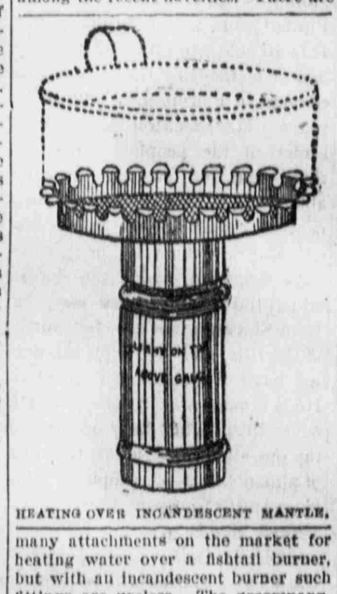
The whiteness of the hemp designates its grade, of which there are four. Binder-twine hemp is classed as "current," "fair current" and "brown." There are without doubt many tricks in this trade, and they are worked all the way from the lazy cultivator to the exporting agent and back again.

The pressing of hemp costs $1 a bale; the landing and shipping charges at Manila are thirty cents a bale. The freight to Manila averages about $1.25 a bale. The jobber's profit is enormous.

A great many things are made of hemp, from floor mattings to binder twine. The natives select the very finest of the fibre and weave a delicate fabric which is as expensive as the finest silk, and they make their rough garments of it as well. Sail cloth is made of it, and cordage, too. Manila paper is made of the rope ends; carpets are manufactured of it; it is used in upholstery and to make hammocks. It is asserted that Paris milliners use hemp in making bonnets. The time will come when new uses will be found for it and its waste, which is very large.

New Heater For Gas Jets.

An attachment for boiling water and performing such operations on a jet filled with an incandescent mantle is among the recent novelties. There are

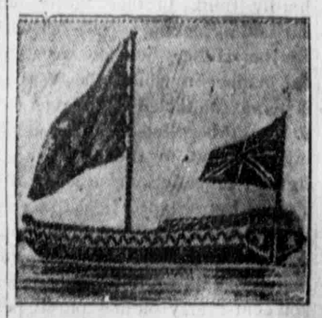


HEATING OVER INCANDESCENT MANTLE.

many attachments on the market for heating water over a fishtail burner, but with an incandescent burner such fittings are useless. The accompanying illustration shows an all-brass stove, which can be used under the circumstances by removing the mantle and chimney holder. It is asserted that it will boil a pint of water in about three minutes.

"The Little Father of the Russian Fleet."

At the recent celebration of the bicentenary of the founding of St. Petersburg the ancient craft above shown figured largely in the ceremonies. Concerning her the London Graphic says:



"This boat, it is interesting to note, was presented to the Czar, Ivan the Terrible, by our Queen Elizabeth. When Peter the Great was a boy at Moscow, he played with this boat, and had her repaired so that he could sail with her in a lake. This led to the interest that he ever afterwards took in naval matters, and the founding of the Russian navy—his first war ships being little more than copies of this craft. He it was who christened her 'The Little Father of the Russian Fleet,' a name she has borne ever since, and in Russia she is regarded reverentially."

Baiting a Buoy.

"Baiting a buoy" is a favorite method with some lake trout fishermen, and is similar to the English practice of "ground baiting." Anchor a buoy strongly in deep water, and when it is in position throw over and around it cut pieces of raw meat or of fish; in one instance, in the Fulton Chain, New York, a hind quarter of venison, chopped up, was found to be very efficient. Bait the buoy for two or three consecutive days, then let a day or two intervene and fish on the following one. An ingenious angler when fishing at a buoy with his boat fastened to it, threw over at regular intervals a handful of white beans, which, as they sank, attracted the fish. Use a heavy sinker, bait with a minnow and keep it in motion by jerking or jigging it up and down for a foot or eighteen inches from the bottom.—Field and Stream.

Prizes For Inventors.

The Russian Ministry of Ways and Communication proposes to offer a series of prizes to be awarded to the authors of inventions of practical utility, both in promoting the safety of railway traffic generally and also in reducing the costly working of railroads.

Most of us can find fault without the use of a search warrant.

HORSES, DYING OF THIRST, DIG FOR WATER.

One of the most pitiable instances of the suffering caused by the prolonged droughts that have been reported from all over the world this season comes from Africa, whence a correspondent writes: "It is a common thing to see horses, when the surface water has dried up, digging in the sand to get water to quench their thirst; and it is surprising how deep they can dig. In the recent drought they were known to dig three and four feet down, and in many cases they struck the bottom without getting to water. Hundreds perished from thirst, and some died while in a weakened state from the sand giving way and holding them fast by the fore legs when down in a deep hole."

RAPID PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS.

Pictures Made as If Turned Out of a Printing Press.

The record for rapid photographic printing has been broken by a machine recently invented, and which is now engaged in the work of turning out prints for the publicity bureau of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. This machine is a very compact affair, no larger than a small table. The cabinet seen in the illustration herewith reproduced, under the table top contains a 500 candle-power electric light, which is constantly in operation and which is covered, in order to concentrate all the light rays on the sheet of sensitive paper. The latter is held in place over the light by a device which is to be seen in the top of the table. The printing operation is performed by the manipulation of a treadle, which is moved back and forth under the table, and the prints are made almost as rapidly as this can be done. In fact, the speed of this machine is almost as great as a foot-power printing press.

The paper used in the machine is what is known as the developing paper, which is sensitive to artificial light. The sheets of the desired size are placed in some convenient place

RAPID PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING.

on the top of the table. The operator puts the sheet in place and drops the lid over it, which insures perfect contact of the paper with the negative. Pressure on the treadle opens a wing shutter under the table top, which heretofore protected the negative from the action of the light. A second or two at the most is sufficient for the exposure, and as the treadle is allowed to fall back into its normal position, the shutter is again closed. Upon raising the lid the paper is projected by a spring attachment, leaving all in readiness for the succeeding sheet.

The operators at St. Louis have become very proficient with this clever bit of mechanism, and one of the young ladies recently established the record of 846 prints in one hour, the same negative being used during all that time. On another occasion, when it was necessary to make prints from thirty different negatives, 1500 prints were made in three hours. The latter task, under ordinary circumstances, would have required the services of six men.

The prints made use of so lavishly by the Exposition authorities are for the purpose of advertising the event. The prints are sent to newspapers and journals of various kinds which make use of matter of this character.

New Safety Lamp.

A new safety lamp, the principal feature of which is that it cannot be opened by any unauthorized person,

CANDLE LAMP FOR THE GERMANS.

has just been introduced in Bavaria. It is claimed that the lamp is especially adapted for use in factories where combustible goods are manufactured. Special candles, burning twenty hours and giving perfect light, are provided. The lamp is finding a ready sale in all parts of Southern Germany.

Natural Wonders.

"Why is a river the greatest freak of nature?"

"Didn't know it was. Why is it?"

"A river has a head, but no feet. Its mouth is where its feet ought to be."

"Pretty good. A mountain is somewhat freakish, also. We have all seen the foot of a mountain, but we never heard of a mountain head."

"That's so. Still it must have a head, for it has ears."

"Has ears? How's that?"

"Certainly. Did you never see a mountaineer?"—Kansas City Journal.

Essential.

"The tall silk hat," observed the student of affairs, "is an essential part of the equipment of the man who would be anybody in society. For it is only the man who doesn't care to butt in whose head is hard enough not to need the protection."—Puck.

A Pungent Record.

A bride in some parts of Switzerland receives from her friends a Gruyere cheese. It is not eaten, but is preserved by her, and all the important family events are marked on the rind.

Of the children of school age in Russia 17,000,000 are receiving no instruction.